



1201 New York Avenue, NW • #600 • Washington, DC 20005
Tel. 202-289-3100 • Fax 202-289-3199 • www.ahla.com

April 7, 2014

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
United States House of Representatives
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bilirakis:

The American Hotel & Lodging Association, the sole national association representing all segments of the 1.8 million-employee U.S. lodging industry, commends you for introducing legislation extending the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 until FY2020 and reauthorizing a critical tourism promotion entity, BrandUSA.

BrandUSA (formerly the Corporation for Travel Promotion) was established by the Travel Promotion Act to help attract millions of new international visitors, explain U.S. security policies, and promote the U.S. as a premier travel destination. It is paid for entirely by international travelers and voluntary industry donations; no taxpayer money is involved.

Nearly every other country in the world has an official program to welcome international tourists to their nation, and the lack of a similar promotional program in the U.S. is preventing us from maximizing the number of visitors to our country. Through industry efforts like BrandUSA, travel is now increasingly recognized as a leading growth industry and a source of valuable jobs that cannot be outsourced.

Between 2011-2012, international travel to the United States increased 7% to a record 67 million visitors, resulting in the U.S. claiming the most tourism receipts (11.7%) in the world in 2012. In 2012, international visitors contributed \$180.7 billion in travel spending and supported 14.6 million jobs in all 50 states, including 7.7 million directly in the travel industry. Reauthorization of BrandUSA will help ensure a sustained increase in international travelers coming to the U.S. and staying in our hotels, which will allow the lodging industry to continue driving this economic activity and much needed job creation. Further, we appreciate your efforts to include additional transparency and accountability measures to allow for the program's success into the future.

AH&LA and our members across the country thank you for your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you to make sure BrandUSA is reauthorized.

Sincerely,

The American Hotel & Lodging Association
Alabama Restaurant & Hospitality Alliance
Alaska Hotel & Lodging Association
Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association
Arkansas Hospitality Association

California Hotel & Lodging Association
Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association
Connecticut Lodging Association
Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association
Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association
Indiana Restaurant & Lodging Association
Louisiana Hotel & Lodging Association
Maine Innkeepers Association
Massachusetts Lodging Association
Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association
Montana Lodging & Hospitality Association
Nebraska Hotel & Motel Association
Nevada Hotel & Lodging Association
New Hampshire Lodging & Restaurant Association
New York Hospitality & Tourism Association
North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association
Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association
Oklahoma Hotel & Lodging Association
Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association
Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association
Rhode Island Hospitality Association
South Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association
Tennessee Hospitality Association
Texas Hotel & Lodging Association
The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association
Utah Hotel & Lodging Association
Vermont Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association
Washington Lodging Association
West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association
Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association
Wyoming Lodging & Restaurant Association